

WILMINGTON SUBDIVISION

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Architecture 522N-1

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I.

In the late nineteenth century a massive movement which would permanently change the landscape of this country was beginning to take hold. This movement was the mass migration of inner-city citizens moving to the outer periphery of the city to live in a more agrarian style environment. The movement in part began with the development of small romantic suburbs such as Llewellyn Park, Riverside, and Garden City.¹ These communities however were not designed for the middle-class citizen who had to commute into town to work on a daily basis. Later, with the further development of technology, it became more and more possible for the middle-class citizen to seek a home outside the central city. Along with technology, another motive for this movement was an 'anti-city' feeling which became widespread.

Some of the changing technologies which contributed to the suburbia movement were the streetcar, cable car, trolley, power tools, plumbing and electrical utilities, mail order house pattern catalogues, prefabricated housing structures, and possibly most

¹Jackson, Kenneth T.

important of all, the automobile.² The rise of the automobile changed the communities in America to a greater extent than it did in any other nation in the world. The main factor which made it possible for the suburban movement to process so quickly was the innovation and ingenuity of the land developers and building companies.

II.

When the age of the 'automobile suburb' was in rapid progression, a man by the name of Ralph W. Larsen began a building company in his own name. He was not known as a 'merchant builder', but he did build various subdivisions in the Salt Lake valley. Along with the Larsen Building Company, Ralph W. Larsen also was the owner and manager of South East Builders' Supply Company. Mr. Larsen was born in 1891 in Salt Lake City, and died while on a business trip in Los Angeles in 1947 (Fig. 3). After Mr. Larsens' death, the Larsen Building Company continued business for the next two decades.

III.

On October 28, 1924 the Larsen Building Company was approved by the City Engineer to build a subdivision which was to be named Wilmington Subdivision. The surveyor who was to measure this plot of land was named C. J. Woolley. The Larsen Building Company was to plan this subdivisions' infrastructure to accommodate every home

²Roth, Leland M.

to which they were planning to construct. Due to the fact that I could not find the names of any architects who designed these homes, it may be assumed that the Larsen Building Company was the designer of these homes. All of the homes were to be built consecutively on a concrete foundation using the balloon-frame method with the exterior being brick. The common house design for the entire subdivision was to be closely related to the 'prairie school' style bungalow.³

The area on the plat map which is marked 'reserved' is bordered on the southern end by railroad tracks which are represented by a line running in an east/west direction at the southern end of the lot (Fig. 1). Mr. Eysser stated that this railroad is used approximately once a week to deliver products to Granite Furniture which is the company who owns this particular segment of railroad track.

Between the rear of the housing lots and the railroad tracks, there is a row of commercial developments stretching from Fifth East to Sixth East in a linear pattern (picture #1 and #2). These businesses consist of a motor bike repair shop, a series a warehouses, a sign company, and a small plaza. This commercial area is currently renting office space although portions of it appear to be fairly dilapidated.

An alley-way which is approximately 16 feet wide separates the

³Carter, Thomas.

rear of the housing lots from the commercial area (picture #2 and #3). In one portion of the ally, it appears that the home owner built a 4 foot cinder block wall to further separate the private property from the commercial property.

IV.

Wilmington Subdivision is located between 500 and 600 east, and on Elm Avenue (2160 South) and Wilmington Avenue (2190 South). This subdivision is part of lot 8 on block number 43 which consists of 10 acres. This area was subdivided into 51 separate lots with all having similar dimensions with the exception of lot number 51. There are a total of 13 separate lot sizes with the average dimensions of the lots being 38 feet wide and 112 feet deep. The dimensions of the northwest corner lot number 51 are 140 feet by 243 feet. The average setback on these homes is 30 feet from the street.

Every house in this subdivision which the Larsen Building Company constructed came standard with a garage. This was a single car garage with a pitched roof that often had a separate access door on the side. These garages were all uniformly built in the rear of the lot with the driveways being the element that separates most of the houses from each other.

Due to the fact that these garages appear to not have been constructed as well as the homes which they were built for, it has been necessary for many of them to be rebuilt or renovated. One such garage was remodeled to the extent that it was converted into

a double car garage (picture #4). Some of the garages have been fully rebuilt with cinder block, and two other garages were totally removed (picture #5 and #6). The two garages which were removed were replaced by the addition of car-ports which are attached to the rear end of the homes. The benefits to building a car-port which is attached to the house is that it is more economical than rebuilding a new garage, and it will also leave more room in the back yard for the owners personal use.

The homes in this subdivision were all constructed with the main floor being built approximately 2 1/2 feet above ground level. Since the main floor is so far above the ground, this leaves a larger area for the basement windows to be exposed at ground level. The basements were originally unfinished, and were built only seven feet from floor to ceiling. In the two basements which I observed, utilities that were attached to the ceiling such as the air vents and various piping were exposed to view. The reason for this is because if the owners were to conceal all of the utilities, (with sheet-rock or other materials), it would consume more internal space which the home owner could better utilize.

V.

The address to the largest home on lot number 51 is 2171 South, Elm Avenue. As opposed to all of the other homes in this subdivision, this is a full three story structure with a stone-cut exterior base. This home stands at an angle on its lot with the front at a northwest view. The original stairway for the front

entry on this home has since been removed (picture #7). The result of the removal of this stairway is a single door side entrance on the north corner of the house. Mr. Eysser, a resident of this subdivision, stated that this house had at one time been converted into a rest home for the elderly. After the rest home had gone, this home was converted into an apartment style residence and has apparently maintained this form of residency since. Excluding this home, this lot has three other structures on it.

The first structure is a single family unit that is neighboring the largest home. It was originally built entirely of wood, and now is covered on its north end with white clapboard siding (picture #8). Along with the white siding, this home also has a later addition of a single auto car-port. About forty feet east of this home is a single family structure which is built of brick and was later painted red (picture #8 on left).

The final structure on lot number 51 is a single family home which was later converted into a four unit apartment house (picture #9). The majority of this home is covered with a white siding and sits furthest east on the lot.

Mr. Thommen, a resident of this subdivision, stated that these three structures are the original homes in this area which were said to be built by early Mormon farmers. Although this is a worthy argument, there is no proof of the exact date on these structures, nor the religion of their owners.

VI.

With all of these homes being built in the first half of the century, it is inevitable that many of them will undertake a certain process renovation and remodeling. Some of these homes have only gone through the simple process of restoration, but the majority of these homes have had some major portion remodeled or reconstructed.

One such home which has undergone some remodeling on the exterior of the entrance way is the home located on lot number 23 (picture #10). The main features which were added to the front of this home are the wood columns which covered the old iron supports, a new fence enclosing the front yard, a small deck which was added to the left of the entrance, and a new door.

Due to the large area available on the front porch, many of the homes have utilized that space to form an indoor entryway (picture #11 and #12). This is done by using the existing walls around the porch, and then further enclosing them to conceal an indoor room area.

Other renovations which may not be so expensive, but can be just as pleasing aesthetically are those which have occurred on the homes of 549 East Wilmington Avenue (picture #13), and 560 East Elm Avenue (picture #14). Both of these homes have had some new paint applied to parts of the exterior, but 549 has also had shutters added to exaggerate the windows, a new door with an elliptical window, and brass lamps to lighten the entrance at night.

VII.

In the search for information, I have found no one in Wilmington Subdivision who are the original owners to their homes. The longest living occupant of one of these homes which I was able to contact is named Rudolph Thommen.

Rudolph Thommen, along with his wife Margaret, immigrated to the United States from St. Gallen Switzerland in 1964. On September 17, 1964 they purchased a home located at 567 East. Wilmington Avenue, and have been living at this address since (picture #15).⁴ The measurements to the main floor on this home are approximately 25 feet wide, 27 feet deep, and consisting of 675 square feet. This home is located on lot number 33 and is represented in plan form on illustration number 4 in the rear of this paper.

Rudolph Thommen has been working with the Litton Corporation for the past 22 years as head of Custodial Services. Although he is now 78 years old, he still continues his work part-time with the Litton Corporation. Margaret Thommen was working as a volunteer at a hospital until she suffered a heart-attack last year. She can no longer continue her work, but has continued serving in the relief-society at her local church.

In the early 1980's the Thommen house suffered some 'sinkage' of their foundation due to the unstable ground. They repaired this problem by partially digging out their basement through the

⁴Thommen, Rudolph.

original foundation, laying a new concrete floor, and repairing one wall. Their neighbors in lot number 34 apparently had suffered some similar damage to their home. Mr Thommen said that a creek had at one time been running near their home and is probably the cause of the unstable ground.

Mr. Willy Eysser is the second man which I interviewed that owns a home in Wilmington Subdivision. He immigrated to the United States from Germany with his wife Betty, and has lived in Salt Lake City since. On May 28, 1970 Mr. and Mrs. Eysser purchased a home at 530 East, Wilmington Avenue (picture #4).⁵ This home is located on lot number 13 and is represented in plan form on illustration number 5.

Mr. Eysser constructed an addition to the rear of his home in the 1970's which is an extension from the kitchen. The measurement of the interior of this addition is 4 1/2 feet deep and 8 feet wide. It has interior area space of 36 square feet. Excluding this addition, the measurement of the main floor of this home is 25 feet deep, 19 feet wide, with 475 square feet.

Mr. Eysser stated that the home neighboring his on the west side with the address of 526 East Wilmington Avenue (picture #11) had recently been purchased for \$92,000. This home would have most likely been sold for less money, although it was recently remodeled on the main floor. The remodeling consisted of a new kitchen, new

⁵Eysser, Willy.

lighting, new wallpaper, new carpeting, new paint, and a new entrance built out on the front porch.

IIX.

Wilmington Subdivision has almost 70 years of history behind it from the time which the land was developed by the Larsen Building Company to the present. This area has undergone many alterations in its history along with the development of its surroundings, but its overall shape and structure have remain unchanged. This subdivision has a wide range of age and ethnic backgrounds and many of these homes are occupied by elderly couples who have aged right along with this area. Every home in this subdivision is currently occupied, and is constantly undergoing change. For these reasons alone, I believe that Wilmington Subdivision has been a successful development and will continue prospering through the years.

*No discussion of the Arch./styles, materials
or features.*

restorative concerns?

As Social-Germanic Background of many inhabitants -

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Eysser, Willy. Personal Interview. December 1, 1992.

Jackson, Kenneth T. Crabgrass Frontier. New York Oxford University Press, 1985. chaps. 4, 5

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Thommen, Rudolph. Personal Interview. December 1, 1992.

Figure #1

WILMINGTON SUBDIVISION

A SUBDIVISION OF
PART OF LOT 8, BLOCK 43- TEN ACRE PLAT A
BIG FIELD SURVEY.

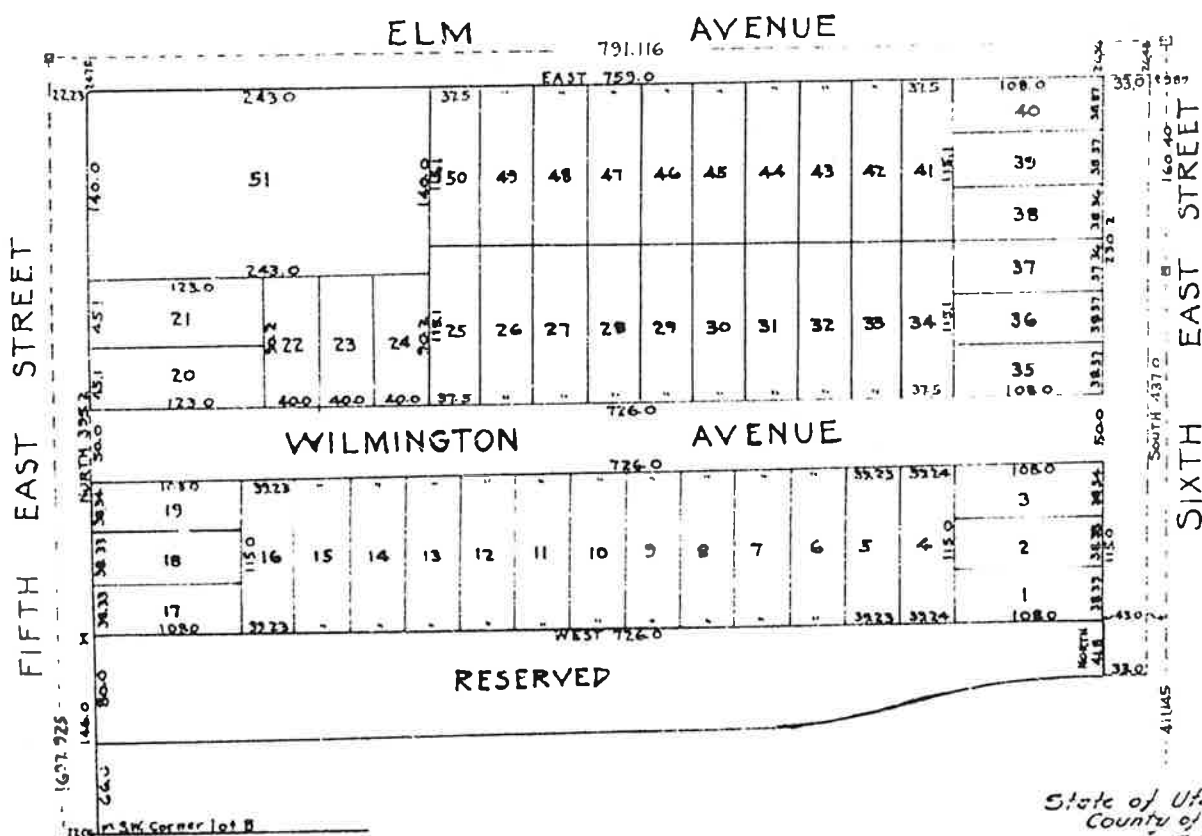
Scale 1" = 100 ft.

Presented to the Board of City Commissioners &
the City Engineer authorized to Approve, Oct. 28th 1924

W. L. Seston
City Recorder

Approved - October 28th 1924

Alvester H. Hamner
City Engineer



State of Utah
County of Salt Lake
Filed and recorded
At 10-15 O'clock - 1
Fee \$13.25
William Cutler
County Recorder

SURVEYOR'S CERTIFICATE.

I hereby certify that this tract of land shown on this map and owned by the Larsen Building Company is bounded and described as follows to wit: Beginning at a point 146.0 ft. north of the south west corner of lot 8, Block 43, 10-Acre Plat A, Big field Survey, running thence north 395.2 ft., thence East 759.0 ft., thence South 437.0 ft., thence West 33 ft., thence North 418 ft., thence West 726.0 ft., to the place of beginning, containing 692 Acres, and known as part of 8, Block 43, 10 Acre Plat A, Big Field Survey, that I have by authority of said owners thereof subdivided same into a street, Avenue and lots to be known as WILMINGTON SUBDIVISION, that the street lines have been accurately staked out on the ground as represented hereon and that the steel tape used in making the survey was tested at the time in accordance with the provisions of the Revised Ordinances of 1920 and was in adjustment with the official Standard prescribed in said ordinances.

NAMES AND DIMENSIONS OF PARCELS OF LAND DESIGNATED FOR PUBLIC USE.

Streets and Avenues.

Figure #2

WILMINGTON AVE 50.0 feet Wide and 726.0 feet long running east and West.
SIXTH EAST ST. 330 " " " 437.0 " " " North " South.

DIMENSIONS OF LOTS.

All lot dimensions are as shown on this map.
This map is accurately drawn to a scale of one inch in one hundred feet.

----- *C. G. Woolley*
SURVEYOR

OWNER'S DEDICATION.

Know all men by these presents that the Larsen Building Company, a corporation, by its president, owners of the above described tract of land, having caused the same to be subdivided into street, Avenue and lots to be hereafter known as Wilmington Subdivision, do hereby dedicate for the perpetual use of the public all parcels of land designated in the Surveyors' certificate and as shown on this map as intended for public uses, such dedication to become effective at the time this plat is approved.

LARSEN BUILDING COMPANY

In The presence of

C. G. Woolley
David Hodge

Ralph W. Larsen
President

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BEFORE A NOTARY PUBLIC.

State of Utah }
County of Salt Lake } ss.

On this 13 day of August A.D. 1924, personally appeared before me, the undersigned, a notary public in and for said County of Salt Lake, R.W. Larsen, president of the Larsen Building Company, who did say that he is the President of the Larsen Building Company, a corporation, and that the accompanying instrument was signed in behalf of said Larsen Building Company by authority of a resolution of its Board of Directors and said R.W. Larsen acknowledged to me that the said corporation executed the same.

Max J. Schick
NOTARY PUBLIC
Residing in Salt Lake City

522325

My Commission Expires Sept. 11, 1928

Filed at request of Larsen Bldg. Co. Nov. 1 1924
P.M. in Book. H of Plats. page 90

W. H. Hall
Deputy Recorder

Abstracted

C-18 page 226 line 8
S 20 page 1

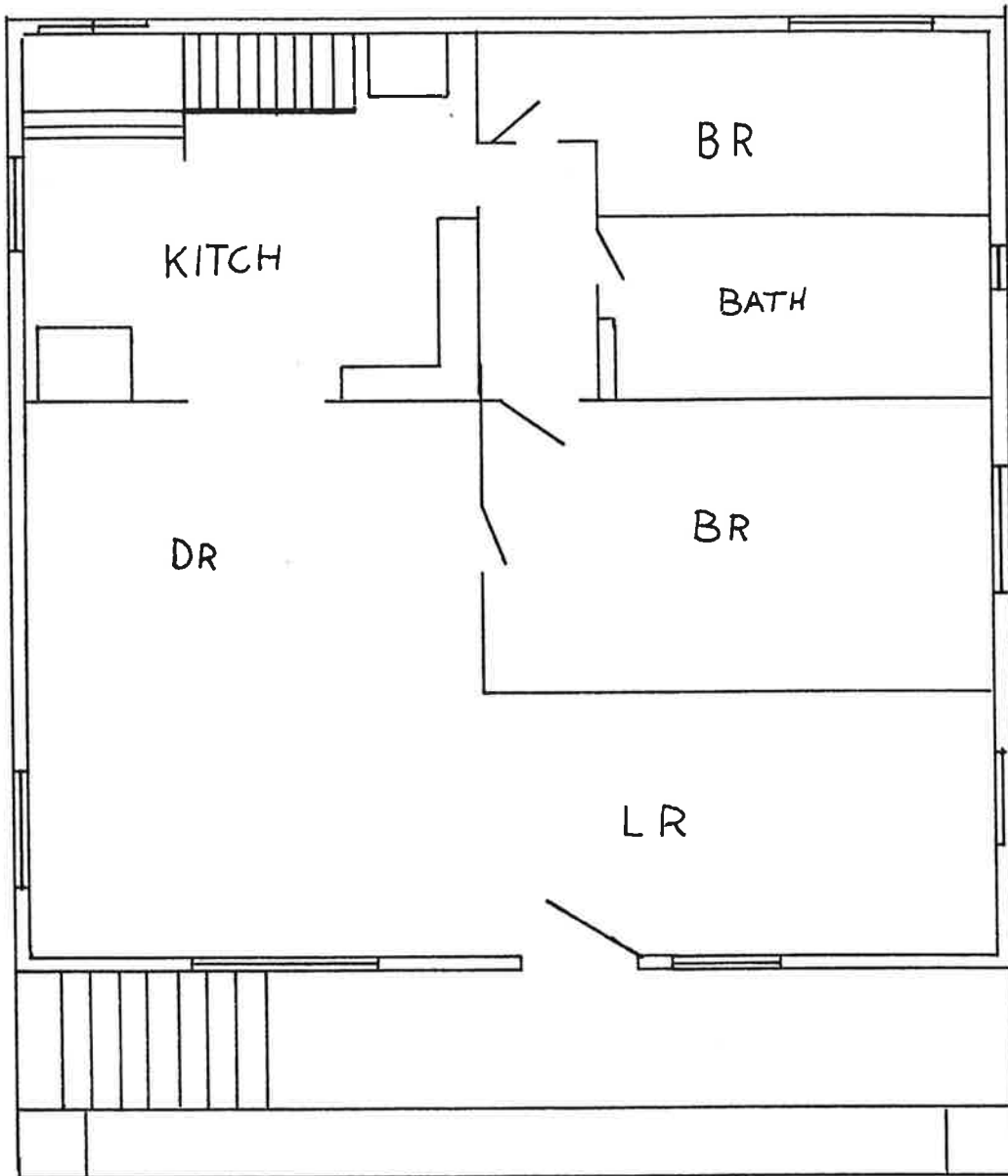
Utah Builder Dies on Coast

Ralph W. Larson, 55, 1678 E. Stratford ave., owner and manager, South East Builders' Supply Co., died of coronary occlusion Sunday at 4:05 a.m. in Los Angeles, where he and his wife, Margaret Larson, had gone on a business trip. Mr. Larson apparently had been in good health on the trip.

Mr. Larson was born in Salt Lake City in 1891, a son of Oscar N. and Sarah Riddle Larson. He attended Salt Lake City schools and had been a building contractor all of his adult life. He was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and of the Elks lodge.

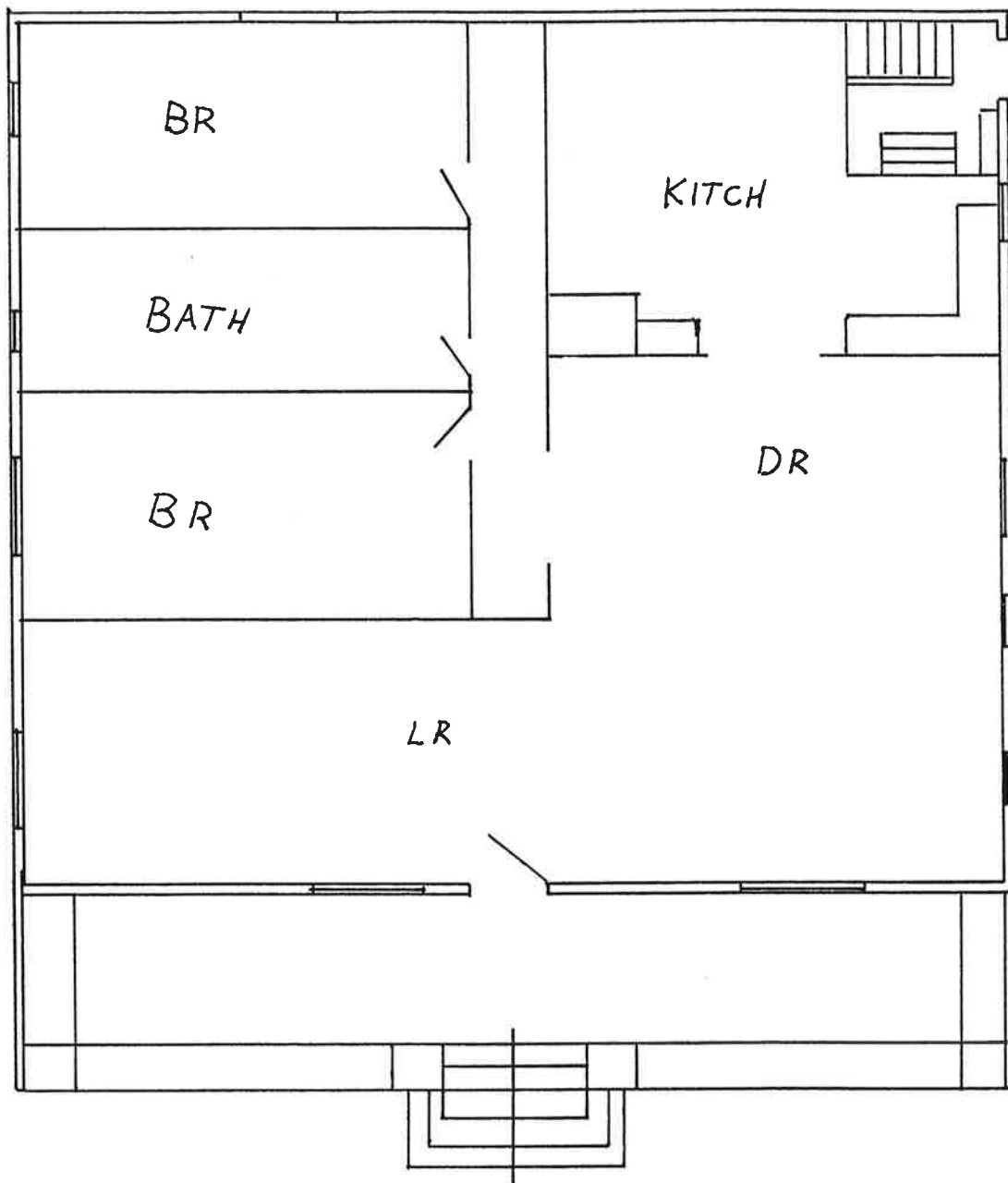
The body will be brought to Salt Lake City for funeral services and burial, arriving Thursday at 4 a.m.

Survivors are the widow; three sons, A. Don, Melvin and Thomas Larson; a daughter, Judith Larson; two grandchildren; four brothers, Frank Larson, Missoula; Roy and Albert E. Larson, Salt Lake City, and Oscar C. Larson, Clearfield; two sisters, Mrs. Gertrude Greetham and Mrs. Leona McArthur, Salt Lake City.



5 FT.

PLAN # 1
THOMMEN RESIDENCE
567 EAST WILMINGTON



5 FT.

PLAN # 2
EYSSER RESIDENCE
530 EAST WILMINGTON

DOES NOT INCLUDE REAR EXTENSION



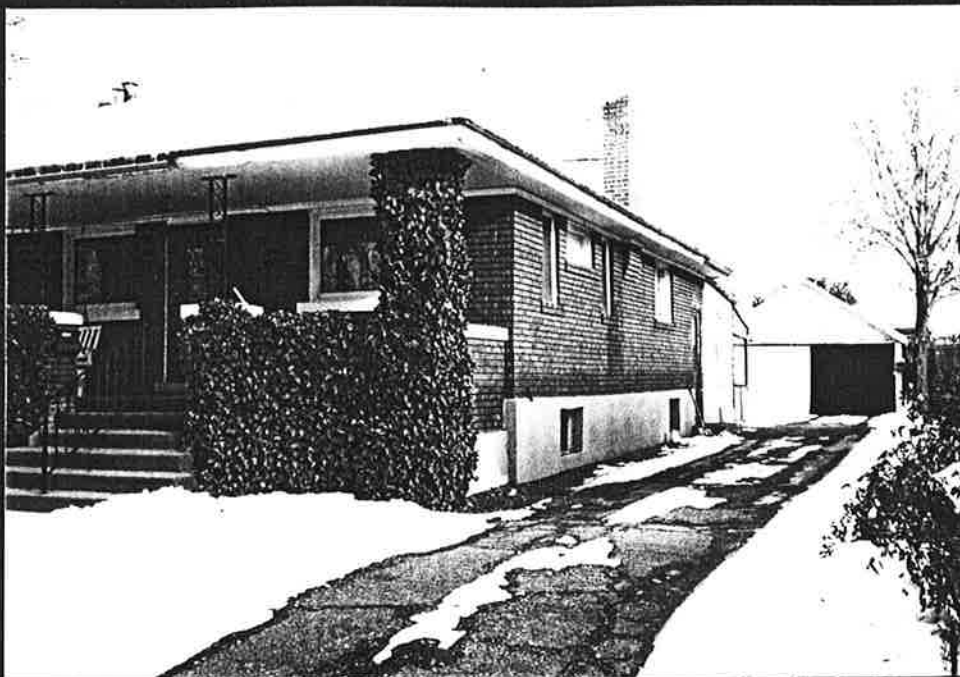
Picture #1



Picture #2



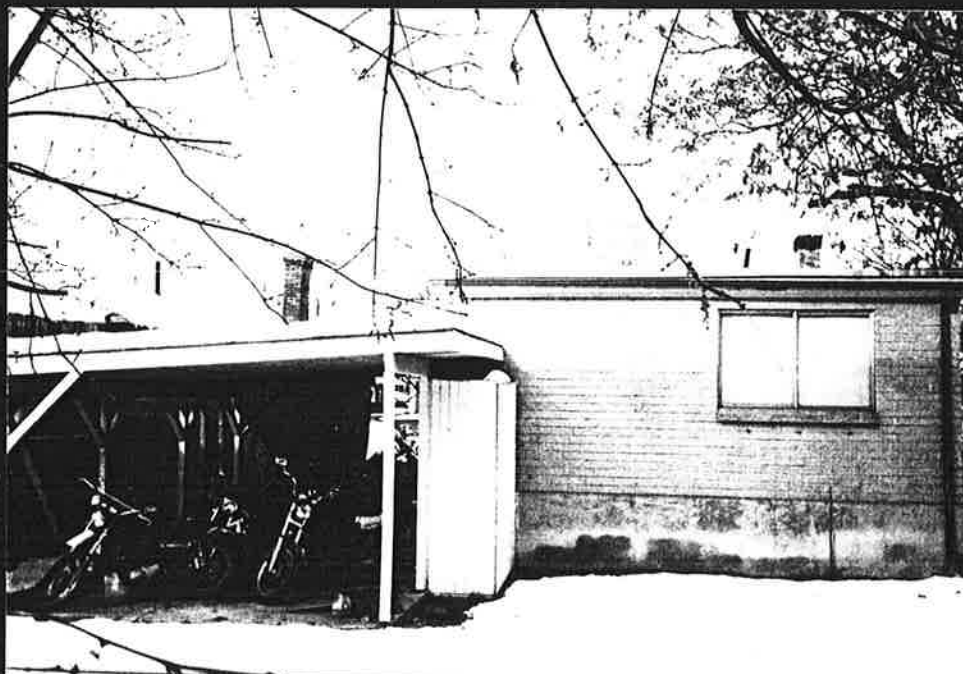
Picture #3



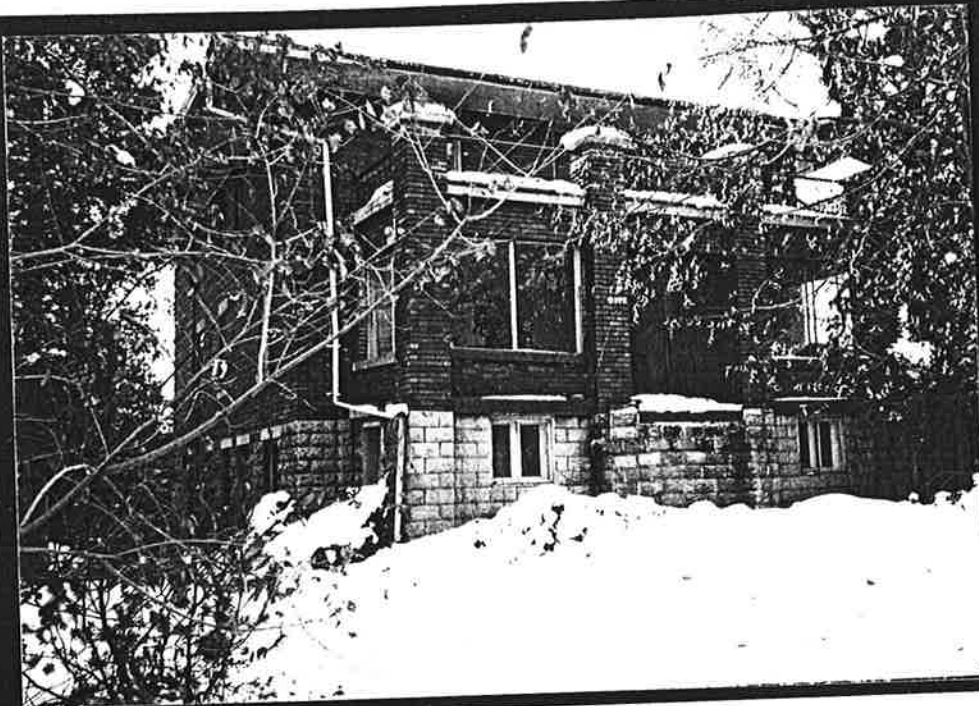
Picture #4



Picture #5



Picture #6



Picture #7



Picture #8



Picture #9



Picture #10



Picture #11



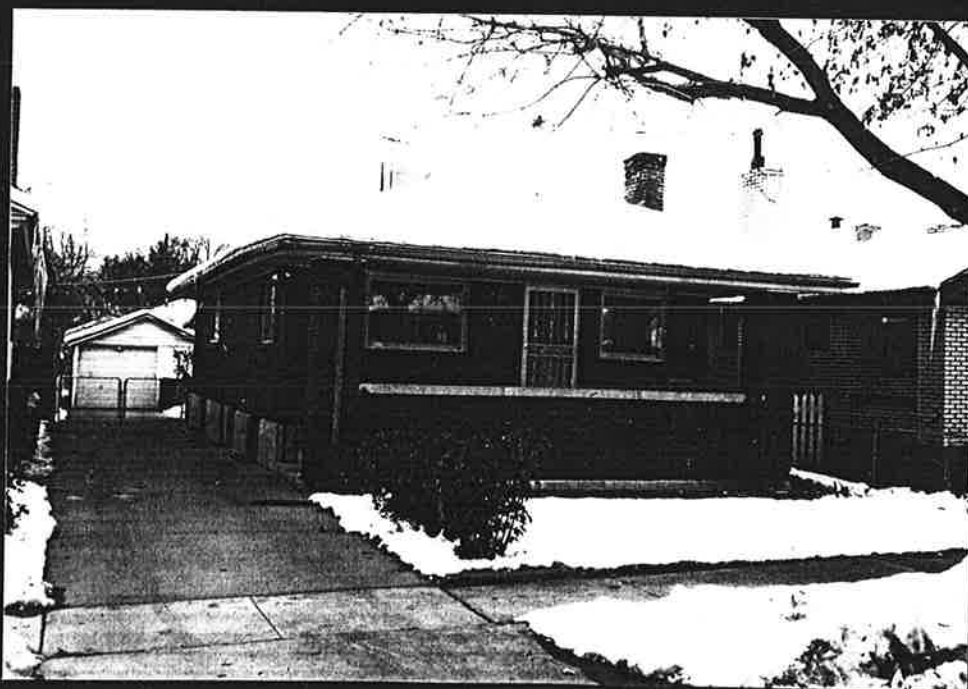
Picture #12



Picture #13



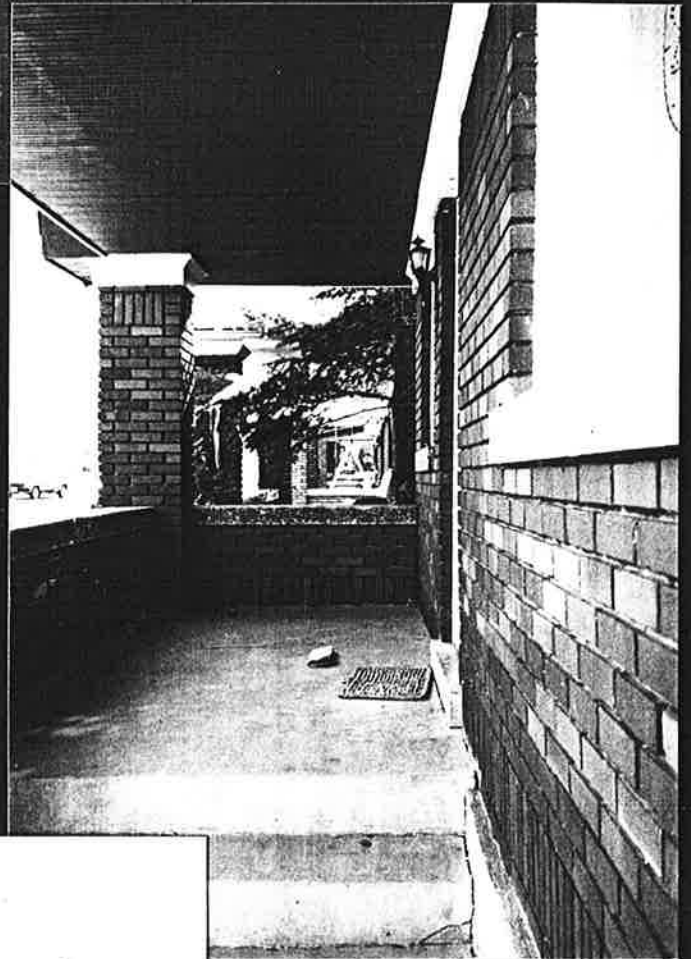
Picture #14



Picture #15



Picture #16



Picture #17



Picture #18